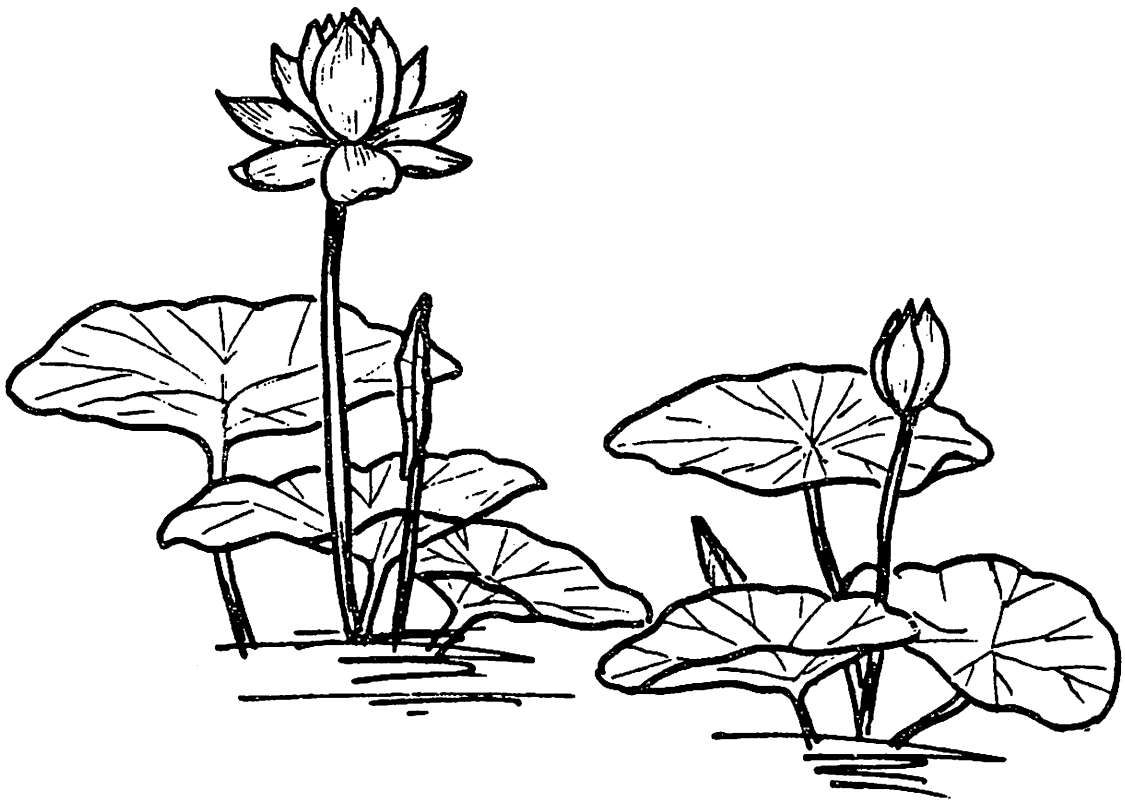
COURAGEOUS BUDDHIST WOMEN

AND

RENOWNED WOMEN OF THE PAST



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In Gassho,

Grace McLeod

INTRODUCTION - Vol. 2

During the centuries since Sakyamuni Buddha declared the Magnificent Teachings, suitable for all beings and a way to see life straight, that is to become fully enlightened, many have earnestly tried to follow His Path.

There have been those who tried the Ascetic pratices, punishing their bodies, depriving themselves of adequate nourishment and care, with the determined hope to thereby realize thr full meaning of life.

There have been those who took the scholarly path, feeling that the accumulation of knowledge, would alone open the way to Wisdom.

There have been those who felt it necessary (and even enjoyable) to experience every emotion and after being delusioned, a true way would suddenly open for them. This had not been for the general welfare of anyone.

There have been those who sat quietly in body and mind, letting go of their ways and making the way for whole new insights. And then you will find what seems like the very simple lives of MYKONIN WOMEN, who gave their hearts over to the WAY OF FAITH.

Through recorded history there have been countless ways in which man has sought to have some sort of peace of mind and freedom from ignorance and suffering.

Then there have been those who have seen the delusions, the suffering and causes of suffering among their fellow beings, and of whatever form of life. They truly cared. They cared enough to discover the best ways to help. In every period of time, since the Buddha made known the causes and cures of suffering, at least a few persons have devoted great energy and compassion towards all others. These are called Bodhisattvas. There are also MAHABODHISATTVAS, that is, those who have come to realize the Teachings of the Buddha and who preferred to help all beings who are suffering. These actively work for the sake of all that live, in one way or another, or maybe in thousands of ways.

On the following pages you will find brief life stories of great women of past Buddhist history, who truly lived courageous, Bodhisattva or Mykonin lives. May their lives inspire us to care, about all beings.

Grace McLeod

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BUDDHISM AND WOMEN

" What is the position of women in Buddhism?

The Buddha gave his teaching to "all who had ears to hear" and made no distinctions of sex. After due deliberation he even admitted women in the Order which he had founded, calling them Bhikkuni as distinct from the male Bhikkhus, and he showed quite clearly that he considered them as capable of entering the Path as men. It is true that he is said to have regarded their inclusion as likely to lessen the duration of Buddhist influence in India, but the reasons for this are chiefly to be found in the peculiar social system of his day. On the other hand there are passages in the Scriptures, for instance in the Majjhima Nikaya where the Buddha announces that the Order to be well balanced must contain Bhikkunis as well as Bhikkhus, and Upasikas (laywomen) as well as Upasakas (laymen). The wisdom of this view is shown by the fact that the Theri Gatha or Psalms of the Sisters, a collection of their writings, were held in such high esteem as to be included in the Buddhist Canon, and are regarded today as showing a depth of spiritual understanding as profound as that of the men.

Buddhism has ever been free from the restrictions of the Christian and Hindu attitude to women. On the one hand it has never regarded her as the Devil's instrument and the cause of all men's sinfulness as did Christianity in the Middle Ages; on the other hand it has never made her the household drudge and slave that to a large extent she still remains in India. Read for example Fielding Hall's description of the Burmese in "The Soul of a People" or any account of the Sinhalese and it will be seen that in these typical Buddhist countries a woman from her girlhood to her death is the partner, mate and equal of her menfolk and never their servant, as in Hindu and Mahommedan lands. It is interesting to note that wherever it had unrestricted power, Buddhism has raised the status of women to a level nowhere else attained. In Burma and Ceylon for example, their position is at its best while in such countries as China and Japan, where Buddhism is only one of several religions, its influence had a markedly more limited effect.

Marriage has ever been, under Buddhist influence, what it is but slowly becoming in the West, a freely entered partnership. The girl neither changes her name nor wears a wedding ring. She keeps her separate property, and carries on business on her own responsibility. Her children are hers to train and educate, and at all times she retains her ideas, habits and individuality. In this respect all Buddhists understand in Tennyson's words how:

> "Woman is not undevelop man,
> But diverse; could we make her as the man
> Sweet love were slain; his dearest bond is this,
> Not like to like but like in difference." "

ATTITUDE OF A SEEKER'S MIND

REGARDING WOMEN

" Byn duro, disciple of Buddha Sakyamuni, returned to his motherland after attaining enlightenment.

He visited a small park one day. The weather being unmercifully hot, he sought out the shade of a great tree and sat down to begin meditation.

This same day the King and his lovely ladies of the Court were rejoicing in the intoxicating heat, laughing merrily and drinking wine. The weather and the wine had a tiring effect on the King who soon lay down to sleep.

While the King was napping his women, well skilled in the arts of love, strolled through the park freely. They came to notice a Monk with shaven head sitting under the shade of a great tree. It was Byn duro, sitting in meditation. And they came up to him, their eyes wide open in wonder, curious about what he was doing there.

Byn duro began telling the young ladies about the suffering involved in a human birth. Without exception, every one in this world has suffering, and all suffering comes from our mind: greed, anger and ignorance. Time went by quickly, but the women did not notice, being so fascinated by the words of this young Monk.

The King had awakened and was searching for his ladies of perfect beauty. At last he found them, standing in the grove under shaded tree, listening to the discourse of a young Monk. When the King saw this he became enraged with jealousy. The King's lay mind was overwhelmed with fantasies of a sexual nature concerning his women and the young Monk Byn duro. His mind further confused from sleep and alcohol, he quickly approached Byn duro with sword in hand ready to take the life of the young Monk who had stolen the attention of his graceful ladies.

"What are you doing here?", the King demanded of Byn duro. The Monk with shaven head did not answer, he continued sitting in meditation, eyes closed, and silent.

Byn duro's attitude of silence further enraged the King. In his uncontrollable anger, the King seized a great ant hill that was near by and without hesitation threw it at the Monk. Thousands of ants swarmed all over Byn duro, who remained silent, sitting in posture, without signs of suffering. The King was so awed by this he forgot his anger, and he questioned the Monk about his life.

"Venerable Monk, how can the Disciples of Buddha live a pure life free from sexual desires? How can anyone make their life without appeasing these desires so strong in the hearts of men?"

"Dear King, Buddha Sakyamuni told us this about women:
If you see a woman old in years, see her as your mother.
If you see a woman of middle years, see her as your sister.
If you see a woman quite young, see her as your daughter. "

" With this knowledge, we can receive this discourse of any woman and not betray our Priest's life of staying pure and single.

"Venerable Monk, even the great Buddha says our minds are filled with the lust of sexual hunger, desiring women of any age, with great beauty. How are you, at such a young age, able to cease these wandering desires?"

"Dear King, Buddha told us of the many foul things that compose the human body, that your mind so desires. Dust and oils and other chemicals with sweat and odors fill the body. When you know this it is hard to find anything wonderful, or desirous about a woman's body. It is easy then to live the Priest's life, and cease wandering desires."

"Venerable Monk, even though realizing the body is a mere composition of different filth, when watching a lady endowed with a firm and full beauty, it is difficult to regard that beauty with disgust. Though her body is made up of filth, her outward beauty would surely even win the heart of a Disciple of Buddha, practicing the asetic life."

"Dear King, Buddha told us to regulate the five senses. To see colors with the eyes, to hear music with the ears, to smell perfume with the nose, to taste food with the tongue, and to touch things with the body. When doing any of these things, we should never lose our self-nature through attachment to any one person, and it is easy to stay single and pure."

"Venerable Monk, through my own experience, I can tell you that what Buddha Sakyamuni has told his Disciples is wonderful." "

THE FOUR GREAT VOWS

Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them.

Desires are inexhaustible, we vow to end them.

The Dharmas are boundless, we vow to master them.

The Buddhas way is incomparable, we vow to attain it.

Along the way to Bodhisattvahood,one takes
to heart these Four Great Vows.

BUDDHA, THE BLESSED ONE OFTEN PRAISED OUTSTANDING BEHAVIOR OF BOTH THE BHIKKHU AND BHIKKHUNIS. A FEW OF THE OUTSTANDING WOMEN WERE:

Baddha of Kapila - for her excellent memory

Baddhakundalakesa - for her strong divine eye

Dhammadina was highly capable in expounding the Dharma

Kali Kulara gher had a swift awakening of Faith after hearing the Three Treasures

Katiyani always maintained beautiful Faith

Khem, wife of King Bimbasara arrived at great wisdom

Kisa Gotama who had sought out the Buddha after carrying her dead baby in her arms in great desolation eventually gave up everything and was satisfied with coarse robes.

THE MOTHER of Nakala was known for her deep sincerity of heart

Nanda was outstanding in her meditation - practice and accomplishments

Sakula had the capacity of learning quality easily and swiftly

Sigalamat was another disciple with very great and deep faith

Suppavass, always offered very delicious food, without seeming to make it hard work.

Suppiya was a highly capable nurse to all.

Sujata was the first to take Refuge after Prajapati obtained permission for women disciples to join the Sangha.

Khend could tell the past and predict the future.

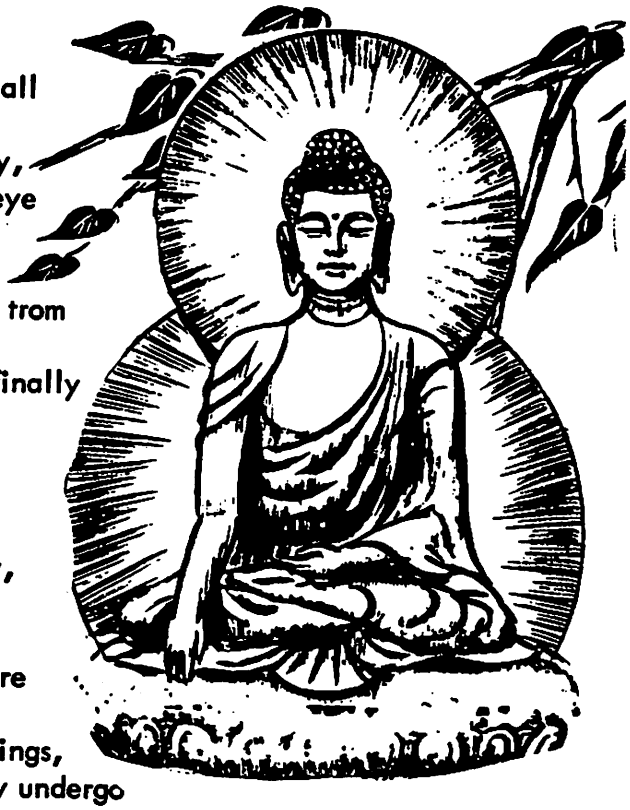
Uttera had the capacity of Hearing the Teachings, without distraction and remembering all.

Vishaka (Mother of Migara, a Bhikkhu) made great offerings of food and robes to the Buddha and His disciples.

Uppalavanna amazed many by her divine powers.

FROM THE AVATAMSAKA SUTRA:
****

At that moment, rays of light emanated from the soles of the World-honored One, universally illuminating the great triple chiliocosm, and revealing everything in it at once in his light. Through the miraculous power of the Buddha, all the Bodhisattvas came to this holy gathering and the Bodhisattva Manjusri uttered the following gathas:



Even when one attains enlightenment
And deliverance, and is detached from all outflowing evils,
And knows not to cling to things worldly,
Yet one may not have acquired a pure eye of wisdom.

If one understands the Tathagata as free from any idea of possession
And knows how things dissolve and are finally destroyed,
One may soon attain enlightenment.

If the mind follows the path of sameness
And enters upon the truth of non-duality,
He will be one beyond comprehension.

The wise know that innumerable things are in one thing
And that each thing is in innumerable things,
And that things are not real because they undergo a continual transformation,
Therefore they are free from fear.

Seeing how beings are oppressed in misery and beclouded with follies,
And how they are stung with lusts and passions,
The Bodhisattvas seeks after the incomparable truth;
And this is the Teaching of all the Buddhas.....
To fight courageously and vanquish the evil ones,
And to make beings feel at ease with loving words:
This is the Way of the Great Sages....

A FEW RENOWNED WOMEN OF THE PAST

The following brief accounts are not meant to be full histories of these wonderful women. I'm sorry because they are worth much more than the simple notes here. Time has "caught up" with me.

ASA - became a much respected lay woman disciple of the Buddha from the energetic, happy and well organized manner in which she followed through on all of her life's duties. Asa set an example, without ever trying to set one. She earned this respect without thinking of herself, without wishing for honor or respect.

It was simply she was thankful for having the enormous, rare privilege of hearing the words of the Buddha. She had a household, a family to raise, many duties to perform which very often called for great patience. Her heart was always consistent. She demonstrated such a serene heart, helped in so many small and even big ways, that it made a great impression on one and all. Asa proved that it is possible to follow a lay persons life, yet still pursue the teachings and follow the Bodhisattva ideal as well.

Of course this takes courage, a steadfast heart and real patience.

BAR-ZA-1HA-WANG-MA Bar-za-1Ha-wang-ma was a disciple of the remarkable Indian teacher, Padmasambhava, who brought the Buddhist teachings to Tibet. She had that rare quality, of a clear, crystal mind. She was most adept at almost instantly seeing a puzzling situation straight. She could also immediately grasp the full meaning of whatever Buddhist lesson was being given. While others floundered Bar-za-1Ha-wang-ma quietly understood. This became so evident that without ever intending to become a teacher, she did become one. She was able through the years to explain many deep and profound teachings, especially on the subject of our final liberation, from this world of chaos and suffering. Bar-sa-1Ha-warg-ma was a truly outstanding Bodhisattva woman of the 8th Century A.D.

CANDRATTARA was the daughter of the illustrious layman Vimalakirti, about which reams have been written. Vimalakirti, who even the disciples hesitated to see, much less enter into a discussion with, less they meet instant failure and defeat. Even Manjusri and Vimalakirti discussion is a good point at hand. So, you can imagine that his daughter was well trained, and many wondered if she would inherit her father's ability at brilliant dialogue.

Sure enough, she was even more unusual than her father. In the first place she grew swiftly and so light was her spirit that she just naturally levitated at will. Like her father she also was generous and helped the Sangha and others at every opportunity.

Further, Candrattara could, when necessity arose,(regarding helping one in dire need,) perform miracles. These miracles were not done to prove her abilities or for any other purpose except to aid one in real trouble. She could be seen now as a man, now as a woman.

Finally her beauty, her ability, her compassion led numerous men to ask Vimakirti to plead their cause with her. At this Vimalakirti just smiled.

But, as sometimes happens with the life of an unusual person people began to gossip, others begged for worldly miracles, so like many true Bodhisattvas she simply disappeared into the "mists of time" and the world lost another Bodhisattva.

RENOWNED BUDDHIST WOMEN OF LONG AGO

Kalasiddhi was born in India. Her father felt that he simply could not raise her after her mother dies, so he took the little one to the cemetery and left her there. Fortunately Madarava heard the pitiful crying and took her home. In time she met Padmasambhava who gave her teachings. He recognized her bright mind. She too was asked by Padmasambhava to carefullt hide his teachings in caves, where they would be discovered in future years and be of special service to mankind.

Tashi-Khye-dren was also born in Tibet near the Nepali border. She could remember her past lives and from that learned enormous lessons. She traveled to meet Yeshe tsogal who taught her, later became a disciple of Padmasambhava - she manifested in various forms, sometimes as a tigress and she helped many, many beings overcome obstacles, especially she helped those who never seemed able to follow thru and make progress with the teachings.

Dro-ma Pam-ti-chen-mo was a Yogini, whose life was free of worldly attachments and who was able to levitate.

Trum-za Pal-zhun-ma helped just numberless persons.

Tashi Tserinama, a mystic consort of Milarepa was his first woman disciple (and was a Dakini.)

Mashia Labronma, a famous Yogini (1055 - 1145).

Vasumitra, became free of all attachments, renunciated all, free of passions

Candrattara, completely realized emptiness - she was daughter of Vimalakirti, could levitate, flew away when too many young men all wanted to marry her.

Sumati asked the Buddha ten questions. In answer the Buddha gave her four specific ways, that is four specific instructions and forty Treasures of the Dharma.

Jewel Brocade, daughter of a Naga King, also called Sugara, said that Enlightenment has nothing to do with being male or female. It is neither male or female.

Lab-kyi Drom-ma of the 12th Century married, raised 4 or 5 children then began to do the Chos practice - a very, very difficult, lonely and time consuming effort to cut off one's belief in the ego. This is a practice most western disciples would hesitate to attempt.

Ma chig lab dron (12th century) This great Yogini is written about on other pages, but here are some of her own words.

In your meditation practice CONCENTRATE - try to pull it all together - be relaxed - let everything go - try to see your mind as it is! Do your practice quickly, clearly. Let go of your thoughts - quickly let go - one right after the other - until they are gone.

It should be remembered that not only did women arrive for and find success in spiritual matters, but also in other endeavors. For instance in Tibet there were three great women Physicians - they were: Khandro Yangha, Surmang Pema and Lobsang Dolma.

There were also in Tibet powerful Administrative and Military women. For example:

Miu Gyalmo Palchen Tso who was a real warrior and shrewd administrator, who took over her ailing husband's work with amazing energy and even governed the Province of Amdo for him.

Jago Tsewang Dolma, was another powerful woman, in fact a very far sighted political administrator in the Court of Derge.

Khansar Yangchen Dolma was a brilliant warrior and Chief of the Kanze area of the Kham Province in Tibet.

In 1935, the Chinese killed Nyarong Chime Dolma, a powerful officer who personally led her soldiers into battle with great success.

While Shugsib Lochen Rinpoche, was an authority, a source of information, a whole reference library herself, in that she could provide important data on any of the Nyingma Buddhist texts. Great Lamas and Scholars constantly came to her for valuable information. She was just a whole storehouse of information. (1841-1940).

In the early 19th Century Sera Khandro Dekyon Wangmo wrote four volumes of famous Collected Works and is highly revered, in the Nyimgma Buddhist School.

There are many others, names of which will be kept in my files. There hasn't been time to research famous Japanese, Chinese, Korean Buddhist women - as yet - but I am including three Japanese Mykonins.

FROM THE KARANIYA METTA SUTRA
****

ONE MUST BE ABLE, UPRIGHT AND STRAIGHTFORWARD;

APPROACHABLE, WELL DISCIPLINED, MILD AND NOT PROUD.

EASILY CONTENTED AND EASILY SUPPORTABLE.

NOT CAUGHT UP WITH MANY "DUTIES" AND FRUGAL IN ONE'S WANTS.

CALM IN MIND, DISCRIMINATIVE AND COURTEOUS.

NOT MISLED BY THE VIEWS OF THE CROWD.

AVOIDING ANY DEEDS BLAME WORTHY BY THE WISE.

THINKING THUS ALWAYS:

"MAY ALL BEINGS BE HAPPY AND SAFE,

MAY THEY ALL HAVE TRANQUIL MINDS.

WHATSOEVER PULSATES WITH THE BREATH OF LIFE...THE FRAIL OR STRONG,

WITHOUT EXCEPTION..THE LONG, THE LARGE, THE MEDIUM SIZED, THE SHORT,

THE THIN OR FAT , THOSE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, THOSE LIVING FAR AWAY OR

NEAR...BEINGS WHO ARE ALREADY BORN AND THOSE YET UNBORN...MAY THEY ALL

BE HAPPY.!"

May no one deceive another, nor despise him in any way, anywhere. Let no one wish another ill, owing to anger or provocation. Just as a mother would protect her son, her only son, with her life, even so, let him cultivate this boundless love to all living beings.

Radiating with a full heart loving kindness towards all the world, free from anger, malice or anxiety..above, below and in all directions. And while standing, walking, sitting or reclining, still free from drowsiness...let him maintain this state of mindfulness..termed the highest living.

And living free from mere views, being virtuous, perfect in insight, shall he be entangled in the round of rebirth...never again.

Many of the women disciples spoke beautiful verses after gaining insights.

One disciple (nicknamed "Little Sturdy" because she was strong and unruffled) wrote:

"Sleep softly Little Sturdy, take thy rest
At once wrapt in the robe thyself made."

Disciple Dhira said:

"Come Oh Dhira reach up and touch the goal where all distractions cease, where senses are stilled, where dwelleth bliss."

Nangsa Obun, was a devotee of Tara and an early champion of women's rights. When someone suggested she try to be reborn as a man in her next incarnation she became indignant and said:

"If there is no real self such as a female or a male why should a female be considered less. This is very stupid," she said. "I want to serve humanity and will just do it in this form of a female."

"With us neither the one sex nor the other is considered the inferior or the superior. Men and women treat each other as equals. The women are not kept in seclusion, but take full part in social life and its business affairs. The Tibetan woman from her childhood learns to be useful and self-reliant and capable. She is at ease with men, for she has mixed with them, with her brothers and boys in general, on an equality from the start. The Tibetan woman is not work shy. The lady of the house will sweep the floor as well as any domestic,she does not consider it derogatory in any way."

Rinchen Lhamo

In an ancient teachings we read the words:

"In the seed of women OR LUST, bruised the head of the seed of the fruits of wisdom and knowledge."

Ether (a name not a medicine) was considered in the ancient teachings to be the spiritual mother of all things.

Long ago the meaning of the word "Witch" was a "a knowing woman."

Some women of Dutch Guinea in years past were very, very clever at taming large snakes, even to making the snakes follow them down the road.

Sundari - a wandering Ascetic - was terribly maligned by many, who feared her powers, her unkempt appearance and unusual places to rest. As often happens, one person spreads an untruth, it grows and grows until there is such a tempest, it has to explode. Sundari was totally kind, completely harmless and devoted to the Teachings of the Buddha. Without going into details they killed her. (And as often happens, they blamed her for a misdeed done by another person.)

To gossip, shows a restless heart, it is said.

The name "Prajapati" is found in many ancient symbols, in ancient articles, Prajapati is sometimes said to be a creator, a special being and so on. In one instance it is written, "When Daksha, the chief of the Prajapati or creatures bring forth 1000 sons".

HE-VA (EVE) was said to be the "INQUISITIVE" wife of AD-AM (ADAM).

Long, long ago women who have been written about very extensively - MARY, DEMETER, KUNTI and DEVAKI.

THERE HAVE BEEN female Goddesses, Tree protectors, Protectors of rivers and oceans, n fact thousands of such beautiful "beings" who have made a place for themselves n history. Some were said to come and speak to Buddha, as He sat beneath The branches of a tree.

THE SURANGAMA SUTRA

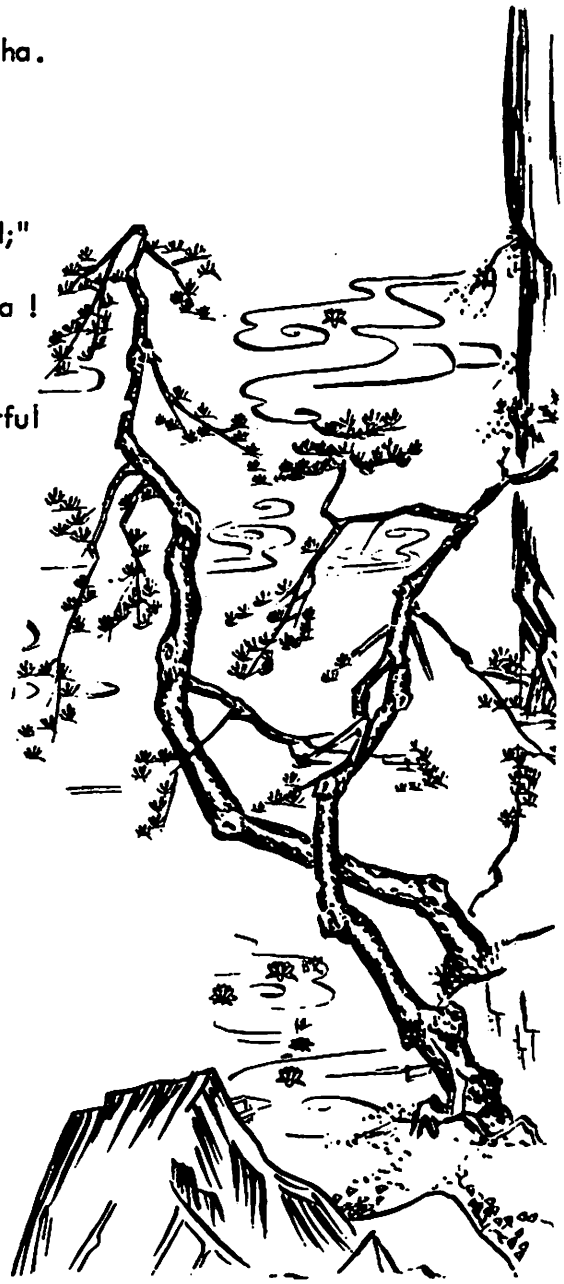
THE GREAT DHARANI

Adoration to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas;
Obeisance to their perfect Enlightenment and perfect tranquility.
Adoration to all living Arahats;
Adoration to the millions of disciples who make up the Sangha.

Adoration to those who have "entered the stream";
Adoration to those who have but "one more return";
Adoration to those who "will never more return to this world;"
Obeisance to their perfect Righteousness.
Obeisance to the Tri-Ratana,---to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha !

Adoration to the Blessed Ones-exalted, firm, steady, powerful
the Kings among Tathagatas !
Obeisance to their perfect Wisdom !
Adoration to the Blessed Amitabha Tathagata;
Adoration to the Blessed Akshobya Tathagata;
Obeisance to their perfect Wisdom !

Adoration to the Blessed Master of Healing,
The Glorious Bhairaviya, the Kingly Tathagata.
Adoration to the Blessed One, Sambhasana, the Sala tree
Among trees, the Kingly Tathagata.
Adoration to the Blessed One, Shakyamuni Tathagata;
Adoration to their Highest Perfect Wisdom !



FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN ONLY

Long ago, during the time of the Buddha, there lived a beautiful and prominent young girl by the name of Vishaka. Her father made a "successful" marriage for her. Later on in life she was a real help to the Buddha and His disciples, but that is another story. This story concern the instructions given to her, by her father upon her marriage. A life devoted to the comfort and happiness of her in-laws and husband. Here are some of the instructions (rules):

1. THE INDOOR FIRE SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN OUTSIDE THE HOME

By this her father meant to tell her it was unwise to tell neighbors, friends, other relatives anything about her family problems. It merely adds more troubles and starts a lot of gossip.

2. THE OUTSIDE FIRE SHOULD NOT BE BROUGHT INSIDE

By this her father meant, don't rush home with a lot of gossip heard when shopping, etc. It only makes the others feel 'yukky' and spreads around further gossip. Besides the family will start wondering "and what did you say to all that"?

3. GIVE ONLY TO THOSE WHO GIVE

If someone askes for a loan of well whatever, only oblige if you are sure it will be returned.

4. SIT HAPPILY

When a wife sits, it should be in a most proper way, always considering the best seats for husband and in-laws or elders. And it is best to remain standing in the presence of husband and in-laws. (I knew you'd like this one).

5. SLEEP HAPPILY

Be sure to take care of whatever the other family needs - check the doors, fire, windows,etc., before retiring.

6. EAT HAPPILY

Make sure everybody else, even the servants have had their food before eating - don't sneak anything - a good wife waits (that's easy, isn't it?) to eat

7. HONOUR THE HOUSEHOLD DIVINITIES

Remember that the in-laws and husband are like the gods - treat them at all times as if they were gods - honour them as gods.

Growing up surrounded by attendants, she saw, looking through her lattice, Satthuka the chaplain's son, a highwayman, being led to execution by the city guard by the order of the king. Falling in love with him, she fell prone on her couch, saying: 'If I get him, I shall live; if not, I shall die.' Then her father, hearing of her state, out of his great love for her, bribed the guard heavily to release the thief, let him be bathed with perfumed water, adorned him, and let him come where Bhadda, decked in jewels, waited upon him. Then Satthuka very soon coveted her jewels, and said, 'Bhadda, when the city guards were taking me to the Robber's Cliff, I vowed to the Cliff deity that if my life were spared, I would bring an offering. Do you make one ready?' Wishing to please him, she did so, and adorning herself with all her jewels, mounted a chariot with him, and drove to the Cliff. And Satthuka, to have her in his power, stopped the attendants; and taking the offering, went up alone with her, but spoke no word of affection to her. And by his behavior she discerned his plot. Then he bade her to take off her outer robe and wrap in it the jewels she was wearing. She asked him what had she done amiss, and he answered: 'You fool, do you fancy I have come here to make offering? I have come to get your ornaments.' 'But whose, then dear one, are the ornaments and whose am I? I know nothing of that derision.' 'So be it, dear; but grant me this one wish: let me,while wearing my jewels embrace you.' He consented saying, 'Very well.' She thereupon embraced him in front, and then, as if embracing from the back, pushed him over the precipice. And the deity dwelling on the mountain saw her do this feat and praised her cleverness, saying:

> Not in every case is Man the wiser ever;
> Woman, too, when swift to see, may prove as clever.
> Not in every case is Man the wiser reckoned;
> Woman, too, is clever, and she thinks but a second.

Cho-rog-za-Chang chub-ma, of Tibet, also lived during the time Padmasambhava gave powerful Buddhist Teachings in Tibet. She became one of his many great disciples and under his direction taught for years. Padmasambhava had a mind that could discern a man or woman of mental ability, a willing heart as well as an unwavering heart which is a necessary condition if one is to proceed along a spiritual path.

Cho-rog-za-chang-chub-ma developed yogi powers and became a Yogini with various abilities. For example there were times when she appeared as enveloped by an unusual fire. At other times she was able to transmit the teachings with such simple but profound conversations that people learned, they understood and hardly knew why or how it all happened. This was one Bodhisattva method not to be met with too often. All she expected was a willing heart.

JEWEL BROCADE Also known as Sagara, was said to be the daughter of a Naga King and mystery as to her family and origin caused the curious to explore the subject without success. Her main contribution was in frequently proclaiming that enlightenment had nothing to do with being either male or female. She spoke so carefully, yet so freely and wisely at the right moment, that people could not help but be impressed and swayed. This in a world where even women often prayed to be reborn as men was electrifying.

Jewel Brocade, a disciple of the Buddha, also said that nowhere in space does one's enlightenment depend upon being male or female.

At one time a close disciple dared to seek her out and ask the source of her ideas. At that Jewel Brocade answered, "The Buddha."

Thus Jewel Brocade did a true Bodhisattva action for her fellow women of that time.

HEPACIA

One time, oh about 370 A.D. there lived a woman so beautiful and so bright that people gasped upon beholding or hearing her. She was widowed quite young and then proceeded to fill her life with worthwhile study. Without troubling herself with every foolish new custom, style or pastime, she pursued a life of study and discussions among those of equal interests. Since this meant mainly men, jealousies arose, other women began to gossip. Even men of lesser talents for some reason or other became angry.

Actually it wasn't a very good time for women in Greece, they were not well thought of generally and slavery abounded.

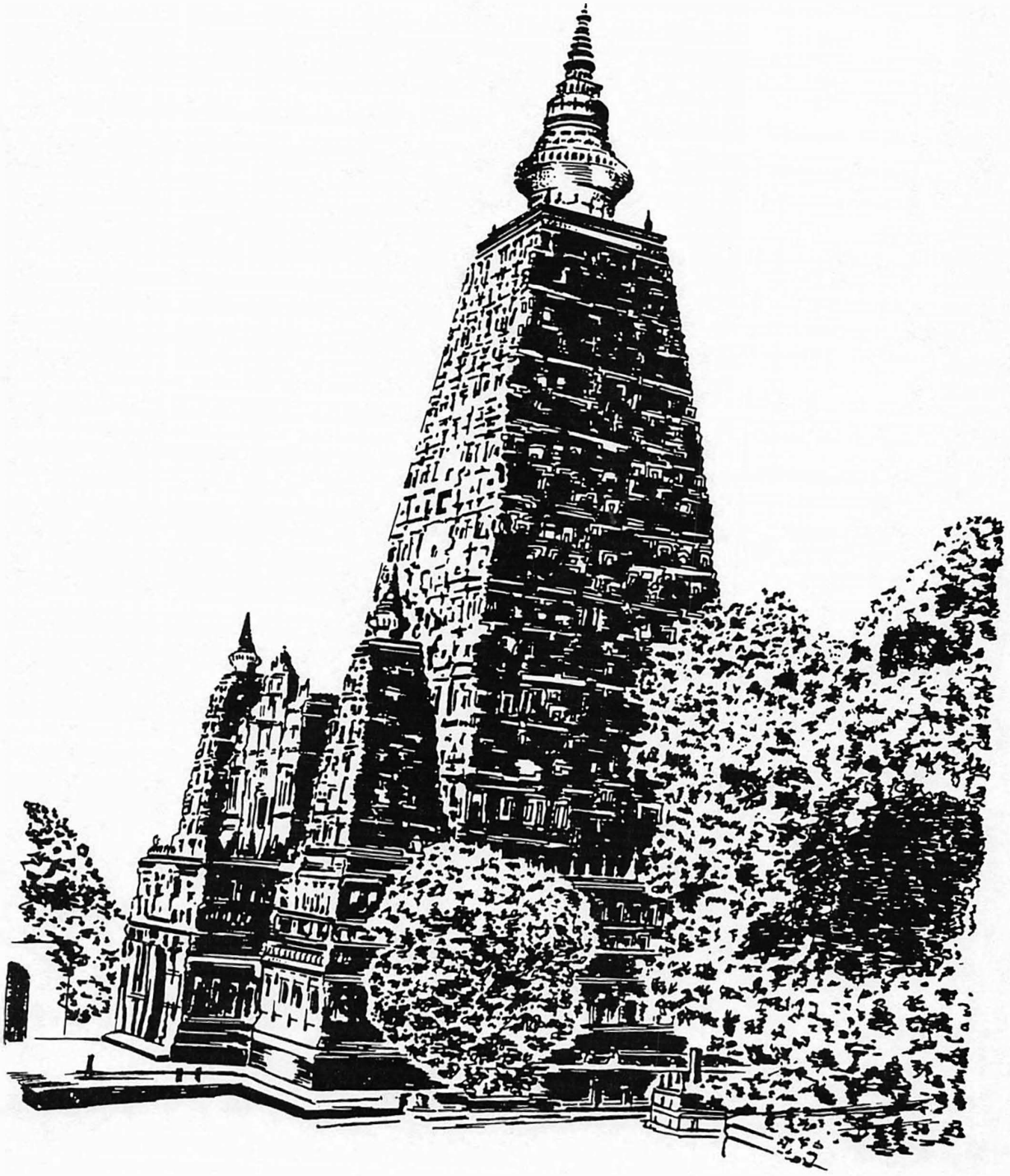
It was also a time when Christians and so called Pagans were fighting. That was pretty vicious. More and more hard feelings arose. Hepacia became the scapegoat. She was blamed for one crisis after the other, while her true story was totally different from the fierce gossip.

On one hand learned scholars cherished her words and writings. She was a symbol of learning and her understanding of scientific concepts of that day, profound. They sought her out as often as possible. They feared for her safety. They were secretly planning to protect Hepacia and to hide her wondrous writings.

Unfortunately they didn't move fast enough. Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria became so overcome with his anger that he formed a posse in 415 A.D. They burned every word she had written. Her entire library, her beautiful writings were completely destroyed, a vast loss to the world. They finished their anger by tearing off her flesh. Later Cyril, defender of the Faith was made a Saint of the Church.

History is full of such examples of hatreds, fears and ignorance which have caused untold numbers of great treasures, of words, art,etc. to be destroyed. Padmasambhava, one of the early Indian Buddhists, who spread Buddhism throughout Tibet, India and Nepal had the capacity to see into the hearts of others. He had ways of hiding the Sacred Teachings in caves and speaking words in such a way that only after centuries would a person come along and suddenly decipher them - thus locating invaluable writings.

Without the Bodhisattva ideal this would be a sorry, helpless world. If one doesn't care, then it is useless to try for any great understandings of life. If one doesn't care, all the seminars, conferences, discussions, etc. in the world carry no weight. If one DOES truly care anything and everything leading towards the realization of TRUTH is possible.



KALASIDDHI

In time past and maybe present, it was the custom to leave the bodies of beloved family members on a mountain side at their decease. This was not done unkindly, it was simply the custom. Vultures and other creatures disposed of them.

Once in India, about the 7th to 8th century there was a small, poor family of weavers. Both husband and wife wove long hours daily but still it wasn't possible to earn a decent living. They barely existed, even as big cities today hold thousands who barely exist.

Sad to report the wife became ill and finally died, leaving him with a small daughter. The husband sat a long, long time in sorrow. He looked at his little daughter and knew he couldn't possibly take care of her alone. Nor was there anyone else who would take her to raise. Thus the daughter Kalasiddhi was seen as an impossible burden in his desperate life.

Thinking this way, the father fed her, took her into his arms and walked once again to the mountain area where he had left his wife. He walked away. The little girl cried until she fell asleep.

By chance the wonderful woman disciple, Mandarava saw Kalaskddhi, took her home, raised her and when she was sufficiently strong, and learned brought her before Padmasambhava.

Kalasiddhi learned easily and swiftly.

Her role as a Bodhisattva woman was to take care of the teachings, as they were given to people. This meant physically protecting papers, notes, teachings. In a time when there were not kodak machines, computers and when there was even a scarcity of paper, this was extremely important. It was also very important to preserve these teachings for posterity and this was not always easy. Wars came, destruction followed. An enemy burned a building to the ground, destroying everything.

Therefore Kalasiddhi's work for the Dharma was to follow exactly the instructions of Padmasambhava to hide the teachings in caves. Padmasambhave himself gave highly veiled instructions as to their whereabouts, so even today teachings of various Buddhists, of different countries are being discovered and found highly suitable to the period of time of their discovery.

As Kalasiddhi grew older and her major work accomplished, it is said that she too disappeared into the mists of time. (It is said some go to the Pure Land, others go to other Buddha lands.)

LION-YAWN -

There was a Buddhist Bhikkhuni who chose to live alone as a hermit in a forest. Her name, Lion-yawn came to her because of her powerful breathing.

Though she chose to live alone, in what became a beautiful jewel like setting, nevertheless no matter what sort of human, or animal or spirit, or god approached her seeking words of advice, or encouragement, or whatever, Lion-yawn comforted their hearts and gave them courage to carry on, in their present incarnation.

MAHAMATI

Lived during the time of the Buddha and followed him, listened carefully and took every opportunity to help the Sangha, in turn had the rare privilege of asking the Blessed One many questions.

Mahamati's favorite question was HOW CAN I HELP OTHERS?

The Buddha made her custodian of many, many Bodhisattva teachings. He gave her one teaching right after the other, in how to care for all beings. Mahamati, had a keen memory and so was able to tell the Bhikkhuni of these ways to genuinely care about and help all regardless. This was of vast help to the other Bhikkhuni.

FROM THE KAMMURYOJU KYO
****

FAME IS LIKE INCENSE.

FRAGRANT AS IT IS, IT BURNS TO NOTHING.

IF YOU SEEK FAME AND HONOUR AT THE COST OF THE WAY,

DANGER AND REPENTENCE WILL BE YOURS.

To covet fame and gain is to lick honey spread on the blade.
If you lick it, you may cut your tongue.

Do not depend on your mind.
Do not let your mind have its own way. Suppress it.
Do not let it run as it desires.

One who carries hay on his back should be careful not to catch fire.
One who seeks the Way should be careful not to catch a fire of desires.

FROM THE PARABHAVA SUTRA
****

ON ONE OCCASION THE BLESSED ONE WAS DWELLING AT THE MONASTERY OF ANATHAPINDIKA, IN THE JETA GROVE, NEAR SAVATTHI. NOW WHEN THE NIGHT WAS FAR SPENT, A CERTAIN DEITY WHOSE SPLENDOUR ILLUMINATED THE WHOLE JETS GROVE CAME TO THE PRESENCE OF THE BLESSED ONE, AND DRAWING NEAR, RESPECTFULLY SALUTED HIM AND STOOD ON ONE SIDE. STANDING THUS, HE ADDRESSED THE BLESSED ONE IN VERSE..

Having come to interrogate the Blessed One, we ask thee, O Gotama, about the falling man. Pray, tell us, the cause of one's downfall.

Easily known is the progressive one, easily known is the declining one...a lover of the Dharma is the progressive one, a hater of the Dharma is the declining one...the downfalls ...the vicious are dear to him...he favors their creeds...he is drowsy, not industrious...fond of society...being rich he doesnot support his aged parents..he owns much property, has gold and silver,but enjoys them alone...he takes pride in wealth, birth and clan and despises his own family...he gambles and drinks and squanders...he is not content with his own wife, but goes to another woman...in old age he takes a young wife and is then jealous of her...

MACHIG-DRON

Machig-Dron was a most, most unusual Buddhist woman of the 12th Century in Tibet.

Her life exemplifies a courageous and daring spirit as well as a spirit of following through on one's beliefs, that is, having a steadfast heart, a very necessary ingredient.

From early childhood Machig-Dron demonstrated a fantastic memory. She had the ability to remember things from past lives. As this became known, people feared she might be able to read their minds; it startled others; it made them jealous and so all the way around Michig-Dron was looked at with dismay, wonder, sometimes with admiration and at other times with suspicion.

Now, it was the custom of that century to hire professional Readers to come to one's home at special times, such as a wedding, or death, or special holidays to read from the Buddhist Sutras. While still young, Machig-Dron began to practice this art and before long she was well able to read the words correctly. Since she possessed a soft, clear voice and as said above, a good memory, she was soon asked to read for different neighbors, then their friends and so on. Machig-Dron became a professional Reader and led a happy life.

Even lamas came to listen to her, she read so beautifully. One day a lama asked, "Machig-Dron, do you understand all that you read?"

This caused Machig-Dron real consternation. She began at once to study. With her quick mind, it wasn't long before her understanding increased by leaps and bounds. After a while, she was somehow deeply attracted to the difficult Chod practice. This in turn required her to learn to used the drum, bell and trumpet, which she did.

Now Machig-Dron related Chod ceremonies in the cemetaries. Years went by. She continued this practice. She continued the reading in homes. But now, more and more people asked her to read in the cemetaries, and less and less in their homes. People became afraid of her, they talked of how many hours she spent in cemetaries. People stopped asking her to come to their homes to read. Hard times came upon her. She received less and less money. She wore rags. Some people would say, "Oh, what's that weird sound coming from the cemetary?" Another would answer "It's Machig-Dron doing a ceremony." Superstitions and fears bring out more fears and unkindnesses in those who are at all prone to such characteristics. Machig-Dron who harmed no one, who acted out of compassion only, became the receiver of real attacks.

So, we stop here, remembering that Machig-Dron, who changed beautifully, who dared to help in places the less brave feared to go, who had gladdened the hearts of many with her soft voice, leading them to a deeper appreciation of the Sacred Teachings, ended her life with equal courage, facing it as one last suffering, in a whole world of suffering.

MAYA

MAYA, the beautiful wife of Suddhodana, King of the Sakya Clan, living in what is now called Nepal, had given birth to a son. This happened 5-600 years before the Christian era and longer before the Moslems. It was a time when there were many powerful, even warlike Clans in India and Nepal. Among the powerful clans the Sakyas held sway over a large area and Suddhodana was always alert to strengthen and enlarge his powers. However he was due for a great shock and years of wondering, from within his own household.

The son, named Siddartha was sturdy and his body bore the signs which predicted special happenings in his lifetime. According to custom a holy man, Asita was called in to examine these signs and to predict the future of the little baby. In this case, the famous holy man, Asita, who seldom left his herm tage was brought down from the mountains with due ceremony. As Maya held her son, Asita looked long and carefully, examining the soles of his feet and his hands especially, as well as his facial features, etc. Then Asita just stared . . .

At last tears filled the eyes of the holy man and the parents became instantly worried.

"What do you see," asked the King anxiously, "Is something bad to happen to our son?"

"O no Sire, tears came to my eyes only because I am old and will not live long enough to see thy son full grown."

"Quickly, what do you see?" implored Suddhodana. "O King, O Queen, a mighty son has been born to you. He will either be a great warrior, conquering many people . . . or . . . or . . . he will be a Buddha such as this world has never known."

The King, the Queen, the assembled people were amazed. How often does one hear such words as these? A Million years? Yet in the heart of Maya, there wasn't surprise - because all along, during the months of carrying her baby, she had felt certain things in her heart. There had been little signs, visions and dreams come to her, though she told no one. Now Maya smiled, she could easily leave this world, knowing her son would become a Buddha, knowing He would contact her . . . yes, her son would truly be a Buddha such as the world had never known.

So, it came to pass, Maya left this world, after only nine days after the birth of her beloved son and her sister Prajapati became his foster mother.

Truly, Maya comes first in the considering of all women, at any time.

FROM THE SUKHAVATIVYUHA
****

EVERYTHING IS IMPERMANENT. ALL IS IN FLUX.. THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW THIS TRUTH GRIEVE USELESSLY AT MISFORTUNTES. THEY DO NOT HEAR THE LAW, DO NOT SEE FAR. WHEN A MISFORTUNE COMES, THEY AGAIN RESORT TO DESIRE ONLY TO COURT ANOTHER MISFORTUNE.

Those who are attached to desire are against naturalness. Therefore they bring misfortune.

Everything changes rapidly. Nothing is to be relied on. Men do not know this and try to get something.

Eschew evil, do good. Pomp and glory do not last long. We must part from each other after all. Nothing is to be enjoyed permanently in this world.

We are blessed to hear the teachings of the Buddha. Let us follow him and be ready for the rebirth in his Buddha-Land.

This world is full of evils and defilements. We should cleanse our thoughts, behave well, do good, and act up to our words.

FROM THE MAHAPARINIRVANA
****

ALL THINGS ARE IMPERMANENT. THIS IS TRUE OF THE THINGS WHICH APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR.

WHERE THERE IS NO APPEARANCE NOR DISAPPEARANCE, THERE IS THE TRUE EXTINCTION, THAT IS, THE TRUE JOY.

GOLD, SILVER AND OTHER TREASURES CANNOT DECORATE A PERSON AS WELL AS VIRTUE.

One who controls his mind keeps good health. A Householder who controls his mind makes a family prosper. A ruler who controls his mind makes his country peaceful.

THE MYOKONIN

" Without paying much attention to their meaning or content
Later, however, impelled by my inner anguish,
I've started visiting the temple anew.

I have found that the more I listen
The more grateful I feel indeed to my Oya-sama;
Such a feeling has never been experienced before by me.

Not feeling like letting my mother-in-law know
Each time I visited the temple,
I just quietly slipped out of the house,
Nobody knowing where I went.

I thought it was all due to my self-power,
That (the Nembutsu) was uttered;
But it was not so, it all came from the power of Oya.
What I was imagining to be the other-power
Was no other than the self-power itself.
Wishing to shun the Evil Path
And ever hoping for the Pure Land -
This very thought was no other than the self-power.

I have been designing all the time,
Saying, "Is this the way, or that?"
But there was no designing after all,
All was given fully and freely (by Oya-Sama).
How grateful I am now! Namu Amida Butsu!

It was because of my blindness and powerlessness
That the dawn came upon me through the power of Oya.
How grateful I am now! Namu Amida Butsu!
I was utterly blind, and did not know it.
How shameful to have thought I was all right!
The Nembutsu I uttered, I thought, was my own,
But it was not, it was Amida's call.
How grateful indeed I am! Namu Amida Butsu!

Now that am convinced of my being definitely destined for the Evil Path,
Neither the Pure Land nor the Evil Path is of any use to me.."

MYOKONON (Taken from the WHITE WAY)

"In the remote farming village of Okunoto in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, lives a woman well into her middle-age and who lives the life of the Nembutsu. Mrs. Fuji Tochihira is the wife of a farmer. The life she lives is very hard. Yet, in the midst of such a struggle, solace was found by completely entrusting in the Other Power. Firm in her Shinjin, she often expressed her feelings through poetry, a medium rather common the unlettered people of Shinjin (the Myokonin).

Accepting the Buddha's Compassion and Wisdom,
Sleeping or waking, Namu Amida Butsu,
Though I know not, I live embraced in the heart of Amida,
How thankful, how fortunate, Namu Amida Butsu,
I am the devil's offspring and origin (parent),
Happiness and sorrows embraced by Namu Amida Butsu,
I am the Buddha's offspring and origin (parent),
So refreshing and joyful, Namu Amida Butsu,
Where is Hozo's place of religious practice,
The place is in my heart, Namu Amida Butsu,
On the eve of a new year the day is fleeting,
And tomorrow, at dawn once again, Namu Amida Butsu,
Compassion is born of the Buddha,
No need to worry about being poor, Namu Amida Butsu.

The expression is dynamic, as is the poetry of different Mykonin who have lived through the centuries. An element which can be found in all Mykonin is the ability to capture in expression two seemingly contradictory extremes as one, such as, the one-ness of emptiness (sunyata) and form (rupa). The paradox of living is expressed in the form of contradiction signifying the need to go beyond conceptual knowledge. If taken literally, many of these expressions are nonsensical, like the idea that I can simultaneously be the Buddha's offspring as well as the origin. When the mind can be free of cobwebs it has woven for itself, this can only mean that one has been touched by the power of the Nembutsu and Shinjin awakened. Consequently, religious expressions become staged in the concrete world of mundane day to day living. A living contradiction is one who tries to be religious as if it were a matter of life and death and yet, is embarrassed when others call him religious. For, he knows deep within that he is the least religious among men.

This kind of deep wisdom is an expression of gratitude to Amida and Unhindered Light for making life meaningful. The person of Shinjin lives embraced by the Buddha. "Sleeping or waking, Namu Amida Butsu," is Mrs. Tochihira's expression of gratitude. Suddenly, life takes on a more sturdy foundation which cannot be rocked by superficial and empty problems. Even such a thing as poverty is embraced by the Buddha. Shinjin is firm. "

Reverend Shoin Hoashi

OKARA

In his way, Okara's husband loved her, because she was beautiful and he was proud to "own" her. He well knew that she was jealous, quick tempered and held on to anger for days or even weeks - especially when angry about his unfaithfulness. On Okara's side, she had learned of his many affairs soon after their marriage and this hurt. It also made her furious.

One thing her husband didn't know was that she was capable of making big decisions without his guidance.

Her first decision was in deciding he would never change and that she might as well seek out her own happiness. Though Okara was unable to read or write, her mind was alert, not to her anger, but to other options. During the 1800s in Mutsurijima, Japan, it wasn't uncommon not to be able to read or write. And she was a good listener. Therefore Okara went to the temple and asked the Sensei:

"Can I learn the Sacred Teachings, can I learn about Amida Buddha without being able to read or write?"

Sensei answered, "Yes Okara, if your heart is open, if you listen well and truly want to know - I can help you." Sensei told her of Nagarjuna who said - "Life is a bubble, it is like dew on the grass, like early morning frost that disappears in the sunshine."

Thus Okara came each week to the temple and Sensei guided her. At last, with new understandings, the old anger faded away. She learned that people and things do change, and there was wonderful possibilities for all beings.

Sensei told her of Shan-tao who said:

"If a fire should fill
The great thousand worlds;
Pass straight throught it,
To hear the Buddha's Holy Name."

Little by little she came to know the Three Sutras. She came to know of the deep Compassion and Wisdom within the Teachings. A whole new world opened removing old hurts, old anger, old ideas. Now her heart filled with hope and trust, until finally she gave up and turned everything over to Amida, from a full heart.

Okara became a Myokonin, her husband above all was amazed at her changed attitude and her happiness. He began to give thought to his own foolish seeking after worldly happiness.

Marvelling at the Compassion of Amida, beautiful phrases came from Okara's heart and she would often speak to Sensei. Sensei immediately knew of the transformation in Okara's heart. He began to write down her words and preserve them for future generations of those who would deeply appreciate her life of happiness and gratitude.

So, there are many approaches to showing our thankfulness. A Bodhisattva works in certain ways, Myokonin work in others. All is vastly important for the welfare of all beings.

OSHINO

Oshino San's early life and exact birthdate in Echigo are a little vague, but her later years are clear as a bell. There is no doubt at all about her life and devotion, which stand out as an example to one and all.

Oshino married a farmer and lived the usual hard life of farm wife, of years ago. Unhappily she had no children and since her husband was ill for a long, long time, it was up to her to carry on all the work and take care of his failing health too.

Though they were very poor, she did not skimp on any medication but was always hoping for a new medicine that would cure him. Oshino spent a great deal of their scarce money trying to find a new medicine, but it was to no avail. Oshino had long evenings in winter time to think as she sat beside her husband or attended to his needs. She thought of Amida. She thought of the Teachings. She thought like this:

O Amida
That unknown cry
In my heart
That great longing
So little understood.
How I cast about,
Like a faint searchlight,
Scanning the skies
On these dark nights.

After her husband's death, she was forced to sell the farm, and all possessions in order to survive. But little by little during her husband's long illness she had started to think about life, the reasons for suffering and began to think seriously of Amida Buddha.

And then it happened. She received the gift of Faith. In her case, she truly, truly trusted. She never for a moment wavered. In fact her heart filled with gratitude. From that moment on, regardless of her povertyshe was rich, very rich in the joy of a Thankful Heart. All thought of her former hardships, was gone. Now each day was full of thankfulness.

Finally with a happy heart Oshino said words like this:

"O, Thou, Amida
My days are neither long nor short
There is no time,
Only Thee."

So, we see, when one has a willing heart, an unwavering heart, a sincere heart, the Gift of Faith, totally changes one's entire outlook on life.

O-SHIMO MYOKONIN

As a little girl, O-shimo had no reason to steal. Her father was a well to do merchant. He could and did adequately support his family. On the plus side I must tell you that she had other very fine qualities, such as taking excellent care of her little brother and never complaining about it. Another thing she enjoyed going to the temple, which was fairly near by. Her family was happy knowing of her little trips into the Hondo.

They would have been horrified if they had known that she was stealing money from the Offertory box and buying candy with it. They would have been also ashamed if they had known that she stole pennies from her very best little girl friend, with whom she played every day. However that's the way it was with this pretty little girl.

However as she walked into the Hondo one day, her eyes by chance looked up to the peaceful, beautiful face of Amida Buddha - just as she was taking money from the box. Tears filled her eyes. "He saw me!", she cried. "No - He won't ever love me again. I will never be welcome in His Pure Land."

She decided never to go into the Hondo again. How chould she? One week went by. Two weeks - O - but she was lonely. She didn't feel like playing or studying or doing anything.

O-shimo thought "O Amida, I do not deserve Your Love. Amida I've been too bad." But one day she decided to just walk past the temple and well, maybe the door would be open and she could just sort of peek in and quickly see Amida.

But at that moment, Sensei (who had missed her) happened to be walking by. "Welcome little friend," he called out. Tears came to her eyes. She just stood there unhappily. Sensei said, "Let us sit here on the steps in the sunshine."

With that many more tears fell. At last she told him of her stealing, of her sorrow that she wouldn't go to the Pure Land, and well the whole story.

Sensei was loving and kind. How wonderful that such a small girl already had learned a big, big lesson. He told her of Amida's Vast Compassion. He told her that Amida was not a punisher. Amida was one who takes people, as they are. Sensei told her of Honen Shonin's words which said: "There is power enough in the Nembutsu, even if said but once to destroy all the sins - in the world."

Years went by. O-shimo was always and always thankful to Amida. Her life was one of Shinjin. Her life was full of joy. One day when there was an earthquake and the whole family rushed to what they hoped was a safe place, O-shimo just stayed by the Obutsudan smiling and saying the Nembutus. When her hamily scolded O-shimo she said - "No matter if I'm alive or dead, Amida is with me, I am with Amida I am not afraid - I am just very thankful."

OSONO

"Okamai nashi . . . . . Sashitsukaina-shi."

Life is never easy. It may seem that way to onlookers, but lessons are made available for us to learn or shrug aside.

Osono's friends said,

"You are lucky - a nice husband - a fishing boat - two little daughters; while Tahara isn't Kyoto, it's a safe place to live." Osono smiled happily.

Well, in the 1800s, it was a good life and Osono expected it to go on and on according to her many dreams. However, all life is subject to change, nothing stays the same and before her young life had really unfolded before her, she had lost both little girls. It was a very sad time, because one daughter was bitten many times by a stray dog and died as a result. Osono felt life to be very unjust, even cruel.

Misfortune piled up as it sometimes does. Her husband, her one consolation died leaving her alone and with more work than she could possibly handle by herself. She simply sold everything most of it at a loss, and went to work caring for the ill wife of a local doctor.

Seeing the suffering of the Doctor's wife added to her bitterness. Finally Osono thought, "This is not right. I have to figure all of life out by myself. I will just sit in the temple and think. Some day I will know all the answers, right from my own heart."

The Doctor looked more and more to her for comfort and soon after his wife left this world, he asked Osono to marry him. This was good for them and if everybody had left them alone, it would have been better. Osono's friends became jealous and said miserable things. The Doctor's friends felt that he should have chosen a wife from among the daughters of powerful Samurais.

"O Amida, its been so hard to cast aside the troubles, the unkind friends and all. Its been so hard to silence my mind. O Amida to walk the pathway alone, of my own efforts has been too hard, too weary. I've stumbled on the sharp rocks of life. I humbly ask the Gift of Faith."

At last, Osono thought, "I'll never figure out life." At that she began to LISTEN to Sensei as he told of Amida Buddha's Compassion. As he told of the few things we can offer - A SINCERE HEART, AN UNWAVERING HEART, A SIMPLE HONEST RELIANCE UPON AMIDA.

In a flash Osono let go of her many plans to master life, all on her own. When her heart became willing, she received the gift of Faith, Amida caused her to repeat the Nembutsu . . . . .

Suddenly all the old wounds were gone, unfaithful friends and all. Her heart became exceedingly happy. Her heart became exceedingly thankful. It was like turning from a stormy ocean into a calm inlet. Osono lived the life of a Myokonin ever after this, She wrote beautiful verses expressing her joy.

When she left this world, at the age of sixty-six, her heart was happy and she looked forward to the Pure Land with joy and gratitude.

Oya or Oya-sama has no equvalent in English, it means either a father or a mother and also both of them as parents. Grammatically it has no gender, no number. Oya is neither "he" nor "she", it is either and both. It is difficult to find a proper pronoun for it. It is one who rears, protects, and takes entire charge of offspring. It is not master or king or despot. It never reproves, never chastens, never throws one into eternal fire; it is probably more motherly than fatherly in that it is not almighty God but all-embracing Love; and to it no such titles are applicable as Judge, who gives the sentence of everlasting damnation, Lord from heaven, the Lord of Glory, King of kings, Lord of lords, etc. From this we can have some idea of what Oya or Oya-sama is. Sama is an honorific term attachable to anything.

Oya is the title given to Amida (or Amitabha in Sanskrit) by Shin devotees. Their conception of Amida as saviour is that of the Oya. Amida is Eternal Life as well as Infinite Light. The Sanskrit original means Infinite Light, and for Eternal Life there is another Sanskrit term Amitayus. To the Shin devotees Amida stands for both, Light and Life, and is thought of in human terms and not in physical terms. This is probably characteristic of the mykonin who does not feel like painting his Amida in too high colours, for Amida will thereby become less accessible, receding further away from him.

In this respect, Amida is quite different from the Christian God. While Amida is not too familiar an object like the mykonin himself, Amida does not sit on high pedestals only to be worshipped at a distance, and not to be brought down among ourselves, so that we can talk to him and with him in a friendly way. For Amida understands us, he knows when we are troubled with all kinds of tribulation within and without. He is the sufferer himself just as much as ourselves. He is not an onlooker who stands outside of us and takes pity on us. He is in us, lives with us, and feels pain as we do ourselves. It is because of this that he works within us and raises us above the evil passions which are inherent in us as beings belonging to this world of relativities. It is because of this that while we as relative beings can never be free from all the ills attached to the flesh, we are enabled to share what Amida has in himself. As far as our infirmities go we are most miserable, most despicable creatures, and yet we can by the help of Amida, the "Other-power," enjoy a joy not belonging to this world.

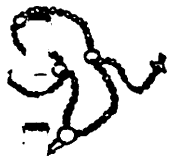
In Shin Buddhism, self-power stands in absolute opposition to Other-power: the Self cannot accomplish anything, all that it does is to cherish evil thoughts and accumulate evil karma and to suffer its consequences; however hard it may try to escape this, or however ingeniously it may plan out its scheme of self-salvation, it can never attain its end.

God paid for his own folly, for his wishing to see himself reflected in his image was no more than an act of folly. Why did he not remain in his eternal solitariness? But, to tell the truth, this folly on the part of God is the greatest mystery, and man, as long as he is what he is, can never solve it to his intellectual satisfaction. A divine communication or revelation is indeed for this pur-

pose, which, however, will never come to one whose mind is clogged up with the idea of meum and tuum. Because it is these ideas that estrange one from God, because, the Shin devotee would say, they originate from the Self-power establishing an iron screen between God and his image. The divine folly will thus never be revealed to those minds possessed of the Self-power.

To tell the truth, as far as the human intellect is concerned, this is a strange situation which will never be explained by us. All that we can do if we wish to be at home with ourselves as well as with God, is to accept the situation as we face it, which means the occupation by the Other-power of our entire being; whatever little intellect, whatever Self-power we try to make use of through our own self-conceit, is really of no avail. The intellect reflects something of the divine nature, it is true, but it does not go beyond being a reflection, it can never be taken for the original light. That the reflection has come at all into existence is due to the divine "folly," in other words, to the divine love, the creator of the world, the Oya-sama of all beings.

Oya, as was explained before, represents parental love, not its procreative energy. Oya is the one whose heart wholly occupied with looking after its children's welfare. When Buddhists identify God with Oya they conceive God in this way: They are grateful for their God-Oya because its love or Jihi or "folly" knows no bounds and takes us up in its arms with all our faults and shortcomings, in short, with the three poisonous sins: greed, anger, and infatuation. These sins are inseparable from us, they constitute our being. The Oya-sama does not demand, that we should get rid of these defilements in order to save ourselves. They will never leave us however much we struggle, relying upon our Self-power. The saving power comes from the Oya-sama, the Other-power. In truth, he is forever running after us, he is abiding in us all the time; but simply because of our Self-power way of thinking whereby we imagine that this Self-power alone can achieve the work of salvation or enlightenment, our eyes are dimmed to the presence in us of the Other-power and fail to hear his still small voice. According to the Shin devotee, it is the Oya-sama himself that seeks us out, and not we who run after him. In fact, we are running away from him, who however will not release us from his hold; the harder we struggle to shake him off, the firmer will be his hold. It is like a child in its mother's arms: the more violently it asserts itself, the tighter she presses it against her bosom. "



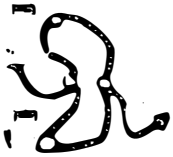
RULES OF THE ROAD

1. The road is trodden in the full light of day, thrown upon the path by those who know and lead. Naught can then be hidden and at each turn upon that road, man must face himself.

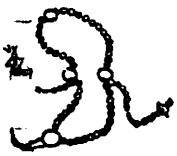
2. Upon the road the hidden stands revealed. Each sees and knows the villany of each and yet there is in that revelation no turning back, no spurning of each other, no shakiness upon the road. The road goes forward into day.

3. Upon that road one wanders not alone. There is no rush, no hurry. And yet there is no time to lose. Each pilgrim knowing this, presses his footsteps forward and finds himself surrounded by his fellow men. Some move ahead, he follows after. Some move behind; he sets the pace. He travels not alone.

4. The things the pilgrim must avoid: the wearing of the hood, the veil of which hides his face from others; the carrying of a water pot which holds only enough for his own wants; the shouldering of a staff without a crook to hold.

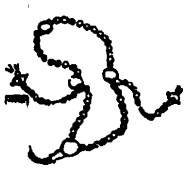


5. Each pilgrim on the road must carry with him what he needs; a pot of fire to warm his fellowmen; a lamp to cast its rays upon his heart and show his fellow men the nature of his hidden life: a purse of gold, which he scatters not upon the road but shares with others; a sealed vase, wherein he carries all his aspirations to cast before the feet of him who waits to greet him at the gate.



6. The pilgrim as he walks upon the road, must have the open ear, the giving hand, the silent tongue, the chastened heart, the golden voice, the rapid feet, and the open eyes which sees the light. He knows he travels not alone.

from the ancient "Tibetan Book of the Dead."



NYUNG NES LINEAGE BIOGRAPHIES: GELONGMA PALMO

" Gelongma Palma, who truly connected with the 11 faced, 1000 - armed Chenresig, was a princess of the Udyana King. She was disgusted by the faults of the householder's way of life and, seeing these clearly, renounced and became a nun. She was very learned in the five sciences, very diligent, and kept perfect moral discipline. However, due to previous karma ripening, she developed leprosy and its sores grew all over her body. Thus she experienced great physical pain and much mental anguish for a long time.

Due to her leprosy, both her hands broke off at the wrists, so she had to take her food as an animal would. No medical or religious ritual or cure helped her. At last her entourage bade her to leave the palace and live in a hut of grass in the forest. There she remained, weeping.

However, one night the Mahasiddha Indraboddhi came to her in compassion, blessed her, prophesizing: "practice the divinity of the Great Compassionate One and you will swiftly accomplish supreme siddhi." After this she felt calm about her pain and practiced the six-syllable mantra day and night.

According to one story, a great mahasiddha named Pelgi Singhi lived in the Kasrapani forest where she was. It is said the he had attained enlightenment by performing the practice of the Merciful One (i.e. Chenresig). The story tells of Gelongma Palmo receiving instruction from Pelgi Singhi and meditating under his direction also.

However, after reciting day and night for some time she had practiced so much she got somewhat bored and thus upset. At this time she dreamed Manjusri came and prophesized she should go to Likar Shingpel and practice Chenresig. He told her that in five years she would equal the venerable Tara's realization. Saying "this is the blessing (siddhi) for you", Manjusri gave her a special pill. She ate it and woke up from the dream.

From this time on, day by day, her diseased skin began molting like that of a snake. At last her body became completely clear from sores and disease by this blessing.

On the way to Likar Shingpel Gelongma Palmo stopped in front of the Pema Dakini and received the blessing of activity. Then she went to Likar Shingpel and stayed in front of the Noble Merciful One who appeared naturally to her. She took the vow called "denchig", meaning staying in one-seat, immovable, until attaining realization. She took Nyung Nes vows and practiced devotion to the Lord of the World, attaining development and accomplishment stages. She recited the long and short mantra of 1000-arm Chenresig and within one year no trace of her disease remained. She experienced many deep and profound samadhi states, good health, and her body returned to normal.

All the evil demons and protectors of the ten directions became under her control, by the power of the Venerable Ones and by her compassion and loving kindness in the development and accomplishment stage of practice. The Eight Great Nagas committed themselves to protect this Dharma and her vow to this lineage.

One time when Gelongma Palmo was 27 years old, in the fourth sagadawa month of the first day, she saw Tara's noble face. Immediately she attained the first level of the Bodhisattva. Tara prayed for her and prophesied "May you do the Buddha activity of the three times".

On the eighth day of the same month she saw the 1000-arm Chenresig Donshak (Donyo Shakpa) and all the tantric (tria) divinities. She attained the eighth level of the Bodhisattva and accomplished great merit by this vision. The tria divinities foretold that she would attain the supreme enlightenment not only of herself, but of all sentient beings, by the Avalokitesvara practice.

Full moon day she saw the vision of 1000-arm Chenresig with 1000 eyes and the four tantric mandalas inside his body. She saw inside each pore of Chenresig the immeasurable pure lands of the Buddha fields. Seeing this vision, she accosted Chenresig, saying "for 12 years I practiced with difficulty. Why did I not see this until now?"

Chenresig answered her that "from the first day you started to practice I have not been separate from you. Until now you did not completely remove defilements; you did not exhaust your obscurations completely". So saying he taught and blessed her and she attained without exception all the qualities of the tenth level Bodhisattva. This was in the fourth month of her twenty-seventh year. She became golden in color and attained the realization stage, inseparable from noble Chenresig.

From then on Gelongma Palmo practiced tantric behavior. As a result, people began to complain and criticize her. Many undevoted and even previously devoted students refused devotion to her.

Each year in Kasrapani forest there was a party for everyone. Gelongma Palmo came there. She performed miracles, cutting off her head with a hook knife, and putting it upon the karcel (monk's or nun's stick). Dancing in the clouds, finally she descended again and reassembled her body. Thus all regained devotion to her. She explained the qualities of Chenresig and by her teaching all men and women attained the supreme liberation of the Pure Land of Joy-space, Thagpa Cacho.

Her aspect externally was Gelongma Palmo; her inner aspect was Green Tara; her secret aspect was headless Vajrayogini. She was also a manifestation of the same being as Mahasiddha Indraboddhi's consort, Lakshikar. Gelongma Palmo and Lakshikar were the same emanation. ,,

PATACARA

If anyone ever lived a miserable hard life, it was the young woman Patacara, with one crushing thing right after the other happening to her, like fierce waves beating against a fragile boat.

When her parents had chosen a young man they considered to be a suitable husband, she became terrified. She already had a secret lover, from among the household help. As the date for her marriage neared and all the plans were in progress, both Patacara and her lover panicked. So, they packed a few belongings, too whatever small money they had and disappeared into the night, without telling anyone.

One struggle followed another. They lived in a small village as far away from home as they could afford to travel. Children were born to them. Their lives were full of misfortunes. Finally Patacara wished to go home before the birth of her fourth child. Home ties often feel strongest when one is in trouble, Her husband thought it extremely unwise.

But one day, Patacara too her children and left home. Traveling was hard, for the time was near for her to give birth. When her husband returned home from work, he searched everywhere and then sensing what she had done, began to search for them. He looked and looked. He called out their names. He was terrified that she might fall and hurt herself.

But as the husband walked along, almost totally discouraged, he was bitten by a snake and sadly enough, died. Patacara happened to be just beyond and heard his cries, she returned to hind him lifeless. She sat there crying. The children cried and it began to rain. Patacara cuddled herslef and the children near the river they were to cross. When daylight arrived, she saw that she must hurry because the river was rising and they needed to walk most carefully over the rocky river.

Somehow, even though it would make this true story more dramatic, I haven't the heart to tell you of the awful misfortunes, which left her alone on the far side of the river. At any rate, as she neared home, Patacara asked a stranger if he knew her family and how they were getting along. The stranger just pointed in the direction of her home, where smoke still filled the air. Her home, her parents, all were gone.

Patacara became almost crazy, mad with grief. She wandered here and there. Her clothes were now in rags. People gave her strange glances and kept away. This went on and on until one day she came upon the Buddha and His disciples. Whereas one young disciple tried to push her away, the Buddha beckoned for her to come. The following were some of the words, the Blessed One spoke to Patacara, as she shed many, many tears.

"Patacara, as you are shedding many tears now, because you have lost husband, children and parents, so you have shed more tears through the rounds of lives, more tears than would fill an ocean. Now you feel as if you have no refuge" and He continued:

"Sons are no shelter, nor father, nor any kinsfolks
Even so, O Patacara, are all mortals liable to die,
Therefore it is better to have lived one day well,
Than a man who has lived for a hundred years."

Remebering the Buddha's words Patacara sat for a long, long time, day by day, year after year, reflecting, reflecting on these words. The Bhikkhunis cared for her. She began to listen to the Teachings, she watched the Bhikkhunis and began to see life from a whole new standpoint. She bacame a Bhikkhuni.

Patacara became serene at last and one day conceived of this little poem:

"One day while bathing my feet
I sat and watched the water
As it trickled down the slope
Suddenly my heart became steadfast
I went into my cell, where it was dark.
I took my lamp and watched the flame until I grasped the wick
And turned out the light
The room became dark again,
But I became full of light
Emancipation came to me.
At last I am free . . .
Free from the past
And my spirit soars.

Thus it went, the Buddha helping every manner of being.

THE WAY OF THE BODHISATTVA

"May I be a medicine for the sick and weary
Nursing them until their afflictions are gone forever.
May I assuage the pains of the hungry and thirsty
With showers of food and drink.
And be an inexhaustable treasure-house for the needy,
Living among them and rendering service in every possible way.
I dedicate myself; my body, its pleasures and all my skills
That all beings may come to complete fulfillment.
For in abandoning all is Nirvana,
and this is my goal.
If I am to give away everything,
Let it be given to the needy.
Though they may make sport of me,
Laughing and trying to humiliate me,
Though they may abuse and beat me,
Despatter or even slay me,
Since I have given away all,
For what reason should I be afraid?
May all find happiness through my actions
And let no one suffer because of me.
Whether they love or hate me,
May these feelings be the source of their fulfillment.
Those who mock, accuse or wrong me:
May they all attain Enlightenment.
I would be a protector of the helpless,
A guide for travelers and their means for crossing the stream,
A lamp for those who need a lamp,
A bed for those who need a bed,
A slave for those who need a slave.
May I always render service in the appropiate way
For the liberation of any who suffer."

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Sentient beings are numberless
I vow to save them.
Desires are inexhaustible
I vow to put an end to them.
The Dharmas are boundless
I vow to master them.
The Goal of Wisdom, is ever beyond
I vow to attain it.

NAMO BUDDHAYA

PRAJAPATI

Prajapati, sister of Maya and King Suddhodana wept over the loss of beautiful Maya, but then pondered over the words of Asita. What sort of teaching, what kind of special training should Siddartha, still less than a month old receive. Prajapati asked, "Do you wish Asita to return and give further predictions?"

"No," answered King Suddhodana, "I have already decided on the finest teachers to make my son into a warrior, second to none."

"But, but what if he chooses to follow a spiritual path?" suggested Prajapati.

"I shall see that Siddartha receives the most excellent teachings as well," answered Suddhodana briefly.

Thus it was carried out. The strong youth Siddartha did excel in every sort of true martial arts of that period. Likewise his teachers fully informed him of the Vedas, that most ancient of profound spiritual teachings. No area of learning was left untouched.

But when Siddartha had married and then chose to leave the luxuries and family life to go live among the ascetic and famous spiritual teachers of his day, Prajapati suddenly began to see life as most impermanent. After all the plans, now every - thing was changed. This was a stunning blow to her. Now, a Buddha in the family?

When Buddha and his newly formed Sangha traveled nearby, Prajapati chose to sit within hearing distance of them. His words sank deeply into her heart. So life was impermanent, so life was full of suffering, so there was a way out of suffering - If it was better for men to be monks, then why pondered Prajapati, wasn't it better for women to be nuns, Bhikkhunis. . . ?

Now Prajapati had never been a softie. She was a highly capable, kind and caring person, one who knew how to get things accomplished and in quick order.

Women generally were not supposed to circulate among the disciples and when they saw Prajapati coming forward, even though she was the foster mother of Buddha, they looked aghast. After a few tried to get her to leave, the Buddha saw Prajapati and motioned her to come forward. Without mincing words Prajapati asked the Buddha if she might become a Bhikkhuni. Ananda,her son, hearing this was amazed. Sariputra and Moggalana were amazed. The Buddha became reflective. No immediate decision was made. The disciples buzzed. The Buddha gently smiled. He thought, "How can women survive this hard life - this life of roaming through hot deserts, deep creature ridden forest? How could women go from door to door standing there without a word until the home owner gave food? The Bhagavan Buddha knew they could reach the same level of spiritual realization as his disciples. He also saw the miserable gossip that would come about, the distraction of some monks, the people who would come

and try to take advantage of women Bhikkhunis - and so on.

Some monks came to him saying women were incapable in this way or that. At that point Sakyamuni reflected on the old, old Laws of Manu, in which women were not even allowed to read the Vedas - were thought to have no merit at all, could not take part in religious ceremonies and lastly were thought to be generally sinful beings.

All sorts of advice came to Him - Women would surely be a distraction, a hindrance.

Hereupon the Blessed One said,

"Men are hindrances to women's celibacy and liberation and women are hindrances to men's celibacy, therefore no one is better than the other."

He added:

"It is better to discern the evil of one's own sex before blaming or discovering the evil in the other sex. If women can so easily snare a man or monk, then the man or monk must be the weaker of the two sexes. If monks are so easily aroused then they are not following my teachings." The Buddha said many things like this and made it known that women had every right to seek enlightenment and further, women were as capable as men in finding it.

This gave cause for great silence and wondering among the disciples.

Thus, in time Prajapati became the first Bhikkuni. Rules were given and the very first Bhikkhuni Sangha was formed. (It has continued to this day in various Buddhist countries, refugee nuns are regrouping, western women are seeking to be settled in the western world and they quietly go about the world helping the less fortunate.)

As the years went by and many had joined the Order, Prajapati did her utmost to strengthen the hearts of genuinely devout women, both young and old. She softened the blows, when families disowned them in unkind ways. There was no way to finance themselves. They depended upon the generosity of householders for their food, and many being prejudiced chose to give food to the man disciples. Their robes became tattered. Prajapati had some sources of appeal and used them.

Prajapati was happy. Prajapati was a born organizer. Many women, due to her high level influence, were given encouragement.

Prajapati did innumerable Bodhisattva actions, during the balance of her life. She deserves a full account, but this is simply brief resumes, not histories of their lives

and deeds. She carefully guided novices, protected them and taught them how to live in what was exceedingly hard circumstances. Prajapati was truly an outstanding women, who dared to rise above foolish customs in the best ways.

The Buddha was often called upon to speak of the role both lay men and women, as well as to clarify the roles for both monks and nuns.

At one time the Buddha said,

"A husband should treat his wife with respect and courtesy, be faithful to her and give her the authority she needs to handle family and household."

"A wife should love her husband, be hospitable to his family, take good care of her own family and use her skills in the best way."*

* See Sigalovada Sutra

SANGHAMITTA

"Sanghamitta was expressly invited by the king to establish the woman's Sangha in Sri Lanka because his sister-in-law Anula wanted to join the order, along with her attendants. A dramatic highlight of her arrival was that she brought a branch of the original Bodhi tree, which has been venerated ever since and still grows, lovingly tended, in Anuradhapura, capital of Sri Lanka in the time of king Tissa. In the Mahavamsa, the arrival of the tree is a magnificent event indeed:

"At the moment that the great Bodhi tree set itself in the vase the earth quaked and wonders of many kinds came to pass . . . Music, beasts, birds, clouds, tumult and rays from the tree made the whole universe to shine."

What of Sanghamitta herself? She established the Bhikkuni Sangha and built not one but several temples or monastic centers, the first called the Upasikavihara where she lived with twelve nuns. Apparently the monastic life for women had a firm and positive beginning in Sri Lanka, almost coincident with the coming of Buddhism itself. What was the Indian origin of the female Sangha? And why is it that there is no bhikkhuni Sangha today in Sri Lanka? In fact nowhere has the female Sangha survived. A look into the Pali Canon can help in answering these questions. First look at the original founder of the Order of Nuns by Mahapajapati who was the step-mother and aunt of the Buddha himself.

"At one time the Awakened One, the Lord was staying among the Sangha at Kapilavatthu - the Pajapati Gotami the Great approached the Lord and asked him to establish the Order of Nuns, the Bhikkhuni Sangha. The Buddha replied "Be careful about this" four or five times, and she went away disappointed. Again, in Vesali she approached him with head shaven and wearing a yellow robe, showing her seriousness of purpose, "feet swollen, limbs covered dust, face tearful." This time Buddha's disciple Ananda, is touched and he approaches the Buddha who says again "be careful!" When Ananda asks directly whether or not women are capable of realizing nibbana, however, it is recorded that the Buddha answered:

"Women having gone forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, are able to realize the fruit of non-returning and perfection." (Cullavagga X254)

And later in the text he proclaims: "I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks. (c. X257). So the original Buikkhuni Sangha was finally established by Pajapati, Buddha's aunt, nurse, "giver of milk." But in this original account of these events there are substantial problems, of two kinds. The nuns are given a position secondary to the monks in hierarchy, and there is much gossip among the laity about the female Sangha, specifically about close relationships between monks and nuns. There were obviously very real problems here relating both to the capabilities of women and relations with society outside the Sangha. Nuns were accepted only on the condition that they obey eight specific rules in addition to those kept by monks, the burden of which is to require longer period of training before ordination, more severe punish-

ments for rule infractions and complete respect for monks at all times.

"A nun who has been ordained (even) for a century must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day. And this rule is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be trangressed during her life." (Cullavagga X. 255)

The general effect of gossip about the possible cohabitation of monks and nuns undermined the laity's faith in the purity of the Sangha.

"People looked down upon, critcized, spread it about saying "these are their wives, these are their mistresses, now they will take their pleasure together." (C.X265)

The result of this criticism was to further separate the Bhikkhu and bhikkhuni communities from each other. Originally monks had officiated in ll ways for the nuns. As a result of the gossip, nuns gradually took over all responsibility for their own discipline. With a single important exception the Order of nuns appears to have been independent: the full ordination ceremony required the officiation of both Sanghas whereas for monks, only the bhikkhu Sangha was required.

This account of the birth of the bhikkhuni Sangha indicates a genuine belief on the part of the Buddha and Pajapati that the spiritual life is fully open to women - I see also a real scepticism as to the capabilities of women for self-discipline; they seem to be treated like children. It appears, there was a great concern on the part of the monks to preserve their superior status as men - for reasons I think are more social and cultural than Buddhist; they reflect the prevailing attitudes of contemporary Indian society. Finally I see in this Cullavagga account and in the rest of the Pali Canon as well, a profound ambivalence towards women; toward their nature, their spiritual capabilities, and their social position. It is hard for the writers to admit the spiritual or social equality of women, even as they see evidence of it around them. They also see ineptness and it is this, more often than not, that was emphasized.This can be seen in the Cullavagga in a passage located between two statements of the Buddha granting full privileges to nuns:

"If, Ananda, women had not obtained the going forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder . . . the Dhamma would have endured for a thousand years. But since women have gone forth . . . true Dhamma will endure only for 500 years." (C X. 256) "

SUPPIYA UPASIKA

" Suppiya was the chief among the female disciples who ministered unto the sick. Her life-story runs as follows:- a hundred thousand aeons ago during the life-time of the Enlightened One Paadumuttara, she took birth in a gentle family at Hansawati. When she had come of age, she once accompanied the city folkwho went daily to the monastery to listen to the sermons that were being preached by the Buddha. One day the Master chose one of the female lay disciples from among the assembly and proclaimed her the chief among those who supplied the needs of the sick Bhikkus. She witnessed the scene and devoutly wished that she might one day in the dispensation of a future Buddha, attain to the same office. With this Earnest Wish in mind she performed acts of great merit during the rest of her time, and departing therefrom fared among devas and men for a lakh of aeons.

In the blessed era of Lord Gotama, she was reborn in the city of Benares in a householder's family. Her parents named her Suppiya. When she had come of age, during the first visit of the Master accompanied by His disciples to the city of Benares, she listened to a religious discourse by Him and attained Sotapatti. Thenceforth it was her custom to go daily to the monastery to hear the Master.

One day, seeing a sick Bhikku she advanced towards him and paid obeisance. Having conversed with him for a while, she humbly inquired into his necessities; "Upasika, I wish to receive some flesh food," said the Bhikku. "So be it, Reverend Sir, I shall send some," replied she. Suppiya bowed respectfully to the Bhikku and departed.

On the following day she sent her maid-servant to the market to buy some meat at the meat-stalls. The maid-servant wandered all over the city, but unfortunately was unable to buy any meat. So she returned home and informed her mistress about the situation. Hearing the ill news Suppiya thought to herself. "I promised the Bhikku to send some flesh-food, therefore he will not receive any from elsewhere; now if I fail to send him some he will have none. So it is meet that I should find a means of sending him some flesh-food somehow." With this firm resolution Suppiya entered her room with a weapon and bravely cut a piece of flesh from her thigh and handing it over to the maid-servant ordered her thus: "Now add all the necessary ingredients and cook this piece of flesh well, take it to the monastery and offer it to the sick Bhikku. If the Bhikku make any inquiries about me, say that I am unwell." So the maid-servant took the flesh and carried out her mistress's behest.

The Lord Buddha through the exercise of his psychic faculties saw the brave and noble deed of Suppiya Upasika. So on the next day the Master followed by a retinue of Bhikkus went his daily round in search of alms-food and arrived at the house of Suppiya. Hearing of the Master's arrival, she called her husband and said: "I am unable to go to receive the Buddha, therefore pray welcome Him on my behalf, and offer Him a seat." The husband did accordingly. Being thus seated the Tathagata inquired for Suppiya. "She is ill and lying down inside," replied the householder. "Do please lead her here," said the Master. So the husband went in and called her saying, "Dear wife, the

Master wants to see you." Suppiya thought to herself: "The All-Compassionate Lord is inviting me fully aware of my condition," and rose from her couch. By the mysterious power of the Buddha her wound was instantly healed and her leg became as whole as the other. Suppiya was filled with rapturous joy at this strange occurence. Then she repaired to the Master's presence, paid Him obeisance by humbly prostrating herself on the ground, and took a seat. The Lord then questioned: "What was the matter with the Upasika?" Then Suppiya related the whole story.

The Tathagata having finished His meal returned to the Monastery, summoned together the whole assembly of Bhikkus and condemned the Bhikku who had partaken of the human flesh. This untoward incident caused the Master to lay down the precept against the use of human flesh as food. Sometime thereafter, the Master seated in the assembly hall proclaimed Suppiya the chief among the female lay disciples who ministered unto the sick. Thus the devout wish made by Suppiya a hundred thousand aeons before attained full fruition. "

by Miss L.E.D. Jayasundera

YASODHARA

Yasodhara was the lovely young woman Siddartha wanted to marry at the approximate age of nineteen. Since Yasodhara was of a very fine family and endowed with the many "womanly graces", a number of Siddartha's friends also wished to marry her.

While her parents were trying to decide on the best possible husband from among the eligible men, the men in turn were making a big effort to appear in the best light, without absolutely showing up their friends in a poor light. There were a good sized number of martial arts students and sportsmen among Siddartha's friends. Finally it was decided that a tournament should demonstrate the abilities of each young man.

The tournament drew many young women who stood together and apart to enjoy this great display. At the end of the tournament Siddartha was declared the most all around best athlete, from the different divisions. Of course, little did anyone know that Siddartha would also leave home and family and become a Buddha. And it was only many years later that Buddha divulged the news that he had married Yasodhara in many previous incarnations.

Their lives together were happy and unmarred by troubles. However, during those years when his Father made every effort to indulge the young couple, he began to think more seriously about life, its fleeting pleasures, its apparent lack of logic. He remembered the Plowing Festival when the oxen crushed the worms and one creature hurt another. He had also seen an old man in pitiful condition, a very ill man, a dead man just sprawled on the side of the road and then a peaceful recluse. All these things gave him food for thought. He decided to find a way out of suffering for all beings. Thus he left home, wife and baby son Rahula.

When Yasodhara suddenly realized her beloved husband had left home, son and all to go live among the famous holy men and ascetics of that time, it was a great shock and sorrow. She asked his father, the king. "What did I do wrong? How did I fail Siddhartha?"

As she came to understand what was happening and heard from time to time of Siddartha's travels among great teachers, her heart was eased. But then she thought, "If he can live as an ascetic among the holy men and follow their way, I can live as an ascetic right here at home. From that time on, Yasodhara wore no jewels, no rich clothing. She ate simple food, lived simply and cast aside the pleasures she formerly enjoyed with her friends.

At last Yasodhara heard that Siddartha now a Buddha, a Perfect One, was to return home to see his father and family. This was a most dramatic time for her. Emotions ran high. How would he treat her? What would he say? What should she say?

IT WAS ALSO A DRAMATIC MOMENT FOR THE BUDDHA, HE TOLD HIS DISCIPLES,

"NO MATTER WHAT YASODHARA SAYS, NO MATTER WHAT SHE DOES, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, YOU ARE NOT TO INTERFERE IN ANY WAY AT ALL."

Yasohara had planned to stay aloof and wait until the Buddha asked for her, but that plan did not last long. Immediately after the King Suddhodana, Prajapati and all family and officials bowed before the Buddha, Yasodhara came into the room. Tears filled her eyes. She prostrated at the feet of the Buddha. No one made a move. Many hearts were touched. At last the King raised her from the floor and spoke long and lovingly of her wonderful qualities as a mother, as a faithful wife, as a home maker. All women assembled stood proudly when these kind remarks were made. Then the King led Yasodhara to a special seat. At that, she called for her son Rahula, now about seven years old, whom the Buddha had not seen since he was a baby - He was the image of his father.

Rahula had been told that his father was now a Buddha such as the world has rarely known. He was strongly advised to be reverent and happy. However Yasodhara had also instructed Rahula to ask his father - which he did - "FATHER, WHAT IS MY INHERITANCE?"

The Buddha smiled, took him by the hand and asked if he would like to join him and the Sangha.

Thus it was that Rahula became a novice monk, and there are many stories which don't belong to this one.

Meanwhile Yasodhara continued to live among her servants and relatives. We wonder how she felt, torn between wanting for her beloved husband to return home and the feeling of wishing him wonderful success in showing mankind the way out of this impermanent life and the way to Bliss.

We leave Yasodhara, a truly devoted wife and mother, who gave up a most precious loved one, to share him with the world and history.

YESHE m TSHO rGYAL

Yeshe m Tsho rgal, was born into a wealthy Tibetan family during the 8th Century. From the time she was very little Yeshe was beautiful, though her father had the habit of saying, "Yes, she is beautiful on the outside, but mean on the inside."

Parents are usually on the outlook to make good marriages for their sons and daughters and this custom was well established during those days, in Tibet and the old world. So, in no time at all, Yeshe was noted by many parents and offers came to her father in great number. Now he stopped openly saying that she was mean on the inside and began to barter in order to make the very best contract possible, one that would bring him some fringe benefitstoo. Oh, like bringing a harvest of riches and a few political plumbs.

However the best laid plans do not always work out and so it was with Yeshe's father. Somehow he got in so deep, that word leaked out regarding his many maneuvers. He immediately became angry with Yeshe, just past age ten blaming her for causing near disgrace to the entire family.

"Go away, become a beggar, do anything you want but quickly leave this home," he said.

Yeshe knew nothing of his plans, but with fear and many tears left home. It was her great good karma to meet one of the women disciples of the famous Indian teacher Padmasambhava. Yeshe was taken to see him. He at once recognized her possibilities. He saw that beside her striking beauty, she possessed a clear mind and an exceptional memory. Young as she was he took her as a disciple, protected her and saw that not only himself but his women disciples explained many Buddhist teachings to her. All loved Yeshe as a student, because of her eager, bright mind.

Padmasambhave and all the disciples listened to his lectures and it became very evident that this ten year old girl could repeat them almost verbatim. She was asked to write down all he said. The disciples were amazed that not only could Yeshe write his message almost intact, but she further wrote them as would be understood by very excellent students, for those less bright, for the ordinary persons and finally in a way that even those of a very poor mind might get something from it. This was a great, great help.

Time went by, Yeshe followed the instructions of her teacher to not only carefully transcribe his words, but to hide them in caves according to his directions. (Many teachings have been preserved from fire and enemies by being hidden away for a few centuries.)

Time went by, Yeshe became a famous Buddhist teacher in her own right. She taught, fed the hungry, gave consolation to those in trouble and herself had many hundreds of

disciples. Whereas at first people were attracted by her beauty, they were immediately amazed and thrilled over her compassion and realizations. To back track a bit. Once when she was still a child, her teacher informed his disciples, including Yeshe that he would be leaving for Nepal. Yeshe began to cry. "What is the matter?" "Oh I don't want you to leave us." Whereupon Padmasmabhava gave a strong talk on impermanence, change and the necessity of control His words went right to her heart and years later when she became a famous Yogini with many powers, she still smiled remembering his words and her tears.

Finally this famous yogini who had spent long years, who had undergone much suffering and reached the age of one hundred and eleven years, decided to leave her body and go to see Amitayus Buddha, to whom she felt great devotion. It was her plan to slip "into the mists of time" as some great ones have done from time to time.

Hearing of her wish to leave, all the disciples, by the hundreds came. They began to beg her not to leave. One after another had an excuse of why she should stay to help them - "I haven't learned such and such - what shall we do without your guidance,etc."

Finally this compassionate teacher said words to this effect:

"I am 111 years old. I have been working hard since the age of ten. See I am becoming like a wilted flower. My body is bent. I would like to rest and especially bow before Amitayus Buddha."

But the disciples to whom she had been so patient through many years, began to get angry. They said words like this - "You can't leave us. We are your disciples. We need you. How do you expect us to get along by ourselves? You have always told us to be steadfast, how about yourself?"

Someone called out, "You are not even compassionate now. How cruel to leave us."

But at that moment a beautiful rainbow filled the place where Yeshe m Tsho rGyal was standing and when it was gone, so was this noble teacher.

THE HEART SUTRA

HOMAGE TO THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM, THE LOVELY THE HOLY

Avalokiteshvara, the holy Lord and Bodhisattva, was moving in the deep course of the wisdom that has gone beyond; he looked down from on high; he behld but five heaps and he saw that in their own-being they were empty.

Here, O Sariputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form., form doesnot differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness that is form.. The same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulse and consciousness.

Here, O Sariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness, they are not produced, or stopped, not defiled or immaculate, not deficient or complete.

Therefore O Sariputra, in emptiness there is no form, nor feeling, nor perceptions, nor impulse, nor consciousness; no eye,, ear, nose , tongue, body , mind; no forms, sounds, smells taste touchables or objects of mind; no eight-organ element, and so forth, until we come to: No mind-consciousness element. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, until we come to- there is no decay and death, no extinction of decay and death. There is no suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path. There is no cognition, no attainment and no non-attainment.

Therefore, O Sariputra, it is because of his non-attainmentness that a Bodhisattva, through having relied on the perfection of Wisdom, dwells without thought-coverings; he has not been made to tremble, he has overcome what can upset, and in the end he attains to Nirvana.

All those who appear as Buddhas in the three periods of time fully awake to the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment because they have relied on the perfection of wisdom.

Therefore, one should know the perfection of wisdom as the great mantra, the mantra of great knowledge, the utmost mantra, the unequalled mantra, allayer of all suffering, in truth---for what could go wrong? By the Prajnaparamita, has this mantra been delivered. It runs like this:

Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, O what an awakening, all hail!

GATE, GATE, PARASAMGATE, BODHI SWAHA

(In the initiation, the mantra begins with TADYATHA OM)

This completes the heart of Perfect Wisdom.

Translation by E. Conze.

THERE IS A VAST, COMPASSIONATE POWER AND BEAUTY THAT IS ABOVE THE MATERIAL, THE EVER CHANGING, THE FLEETING, THERE IS A CERTAIN FEMININE ENERGY AVAILABLE AND POSSIBLE - TO BE USED FOR THE SAKE OF ALL LIVING BEINGS. TURN TO IT.